

Duncan Campbell on
a muck-raking journal

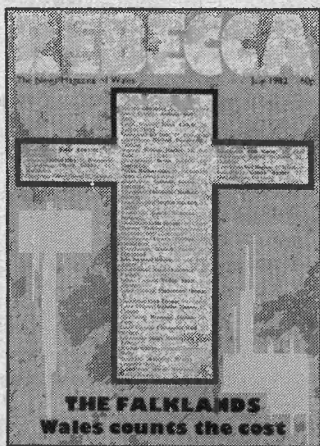
Failed in Wales

THE WELSH RADICAL MONTHLY magazine *Rebecca* has stopped publication after 10 years. For the last year, the magazine held onto the highest circulation of any English language news magazine in Wales. But it has proved not to be financially viable.

Welsh political and cultural institutions, however, have shown considerable aversion to feeding those that bite them. Although the magazine was rooted strongly in the Welsh labour and socialist movement, the Welsh TUC gave no financial support and often cold-shouldered its enquiries. On its demise, a Welsh TUC spokesman commented that the error of *Rebecca's* ways had been in 'backing the rank and file movement — union members who support shop floor power and often oppose their union's leaders'.

The attitude of the Welsh TUC suggests some of the difficulties which any of the widely-canvassed proposals for a TUC-backed national paper would face from such sponsorship. Of *Rebecca's* hopes for wide union support, a Welsh TUC spokesman said 'when they are trying to find out what is wrong with these institutions, it is not surprising that the institutions do not help so much'.

During the 1970s, *Rebecca* — in its first incarnation — dug deep into the Welsh labour establishment. An early campaign placed the (labour) leader of Swansea Council in jail. Other investigations had examined



property deals in his own constituency by Leo Abse, MP, and the financial wheeling and dealing of Julian Hodge, a close friend of Jim Callaghan, George Thomas and other luminaries of the Welsh Labour Party.

Offence was clearly taken there and elsewhere. Whilst *Rebecca's* seven workers (five of them reporters) battled to make ends meet on wages of £70 a week another English language publication, the fortnightly *Arcade*, received grants of over £60,000 from the Welsh Arts Council, yet seldom reached more than a quarter of *Rebecca's* circulation (which finished around 7,500). Ironically, both magazines had originally been competitors for the Arts Council grant. The Council's specialist literature panel recommended that the grant be given to *Rebecca* — stressing, in a specially commissioned report, that 'serious investigative journalism' would be an important feature of the magazine which should be chosen for sponsorship. However the Council overturned this proposal. □